

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 FMC-04 CG-00 COA-02

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R 082105Z NOV 73

FM AMCONSUL HALIFAX

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 651

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS HALIFAX 0224

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, ETRN, CA

SUBJECT: CLOSING DOWN OF PORT OF HALIFAX.

1. IN ABSENCE OF ANY PROGRESS ON NEGOTIATING A NEW CONTRACT WITH MANAGEMENT (LAST CONTRACT EXPIRED DEC 31, 1972) INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION LOCAL 269 BEGAN SLOW DOWN TACTICS AT HALTERM CONTAINER TERMINAL AND AT BREAK BULK FACILITIES OF HALIFAX DARTMOUTH PORT ON NOVEMBER 6. LOADING AND UNLOADING OF SHIPS CAME TO A HALT AND SLOWDOWN TACTICS UNDERTAKEN IN STUFFING OF CASES (TWO AN HOUR INSTEAD OF SEVEN).

2. TACTICS BEGUN BY TRADE UNION MEMBERS, DESPITE FACT THAT UNION LEADER, KEN SCHNARE, AND MANAGEMENT HAD REACHED AGREEMENT ON NEW CONTRACT. UNION MEMBERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT PROPOSED CONTRACT LEAVING SCHNARE HANGING IN MID-AIR.

3. TODAY, NOVEMBER 8, HEAD OF HALTERM, JOE HOWARD, ANNOUNCED ON RADIO THAT NO LONGSHOREMEN WOULD BE ALLOWED IN CONTAINER PORT. REMAINDER OF PORT ALSO IDLE WITH QUASI-LOCKOUT SITUATION PREVAILING. SO FAR NO PLACARDS OR PICKETING. HOWEVER MARITIME EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTING THE SHIPPING COMPANIES, DESCRIBED SITUATION AS A STRIKE BY THE LONGSHOREMEN BECAUSE THE "MEN ORDERED BACK TO WORK AT 6 P.M. WEDNESDAY FAILED

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TO REPORT FOR WORK, WHICH CONSTITUTES A STRIKE AND WHICH

CLEARLY INDICATES THEIR WISH THAT THE PORT NOT OPERATE".
THE ASSOCIATION CLAIMS THAT IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT HAD
NO RECOURSE BUT TO AVAIL ITSELF OF ITS RIGHTS UNDER THE CANADA
LABOR CODE AND TO LOCKOUT THE UNION PENDING FINAL DISPOSITION
OF THE DISPUTE.

4. BASIC ISSUE ON WHICH THERE IS DISAGREEMENT ARE SIZE OF
WORK-GANGS (PROPOSED TO BE REDUCED FROM 16 TO 12 OVER NEXT
TWO YEARS), DISPATCH SYSTEM OF HIRING PRACTICES AND WAGE
AND FRINGE BENEFITS. MANAGEMENT CLAIMS UNION REFUSES TO WORK
AFTER 5 P.M. (WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR FAILURE TO TURN UP
YESTERDAY) AND OTHER OVERTIME HOURS INCLUDING WEEKENDS.

5. CRUX OF ISSUE FOR THE MOMENT IS WHO WILL BE HELD LEGALLY
LIABLE FOR CESSATION OF PORT OPERATIONS. IF MANAGEMENT IS
CONSIDERED TO HAVE INVOKED A LOCKOUT, UNION MEMBERS CAN STAY
OUT FOR LONG PERIOD OF TIME, WHILE DRAWING UNEMPLOYMENT
BENEFITS. CONTRARYWISE, IF UNION HELD TO BE ON STRIKE, MANAGEMENT
WILL BE IN BETTER NEGOTIATING POSITION AS UNION MEMBERS CANNOT
DRAW SUCH COMPENSATION AND MUST RELY ON UNION ASSISTANCE.

6. PORT OF HALIFAX HAS LONG HISTORY OF TRANQUIL RELATIONS
BETWEEN UNION AND MANAGEMENT WITH SCARCELY ANY TROUBLE FOR
PAST 65 YEARS AND NO STRIKE THREAT FOR AT LEAST 21 YEARS.
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